

Silver Award Project Utility

Facility: Fresenius Medical Care--St. Charles

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Project Status: Active ▼

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1. Description of Project:

After grant approval, the social worker and dietitian for the PD program at Fresenius Medical Care Clinic 1646 launched a three-month intervention to raise serum albumin in its 16 active peritoneal dialysis (PD) patients by boosting daily protein intake.

The project combined education, hands-on product exposure, and positive reinforcement:

Custom handout & chair-side teaching: A printable PDF educational handout explained why protein is important for PD patients and offered meal/snack ideas with low-phosphorus options.

Monthly Protein Product Sampling: Using grant funds, patients received rotating high-protein foods-ready-to-drink shakes, chips, meat sticks, oats, pastries, bars, muffins, -to trial at home and identify favorites they would realistically purchase.

Activities: Quick "Protein Search" worksheets (to help patients remember protein options) and a survey (to assess whether patients are increasing their protein intake)

Behavior-change raffle incentives: Patients who reported a concrete step toward higher protein intake were entered into drawings for one microwave egg maker and two Magic Bullet blenders-tools that simplify protein-rich meal prep.

Dietitian sent emails to the companies of the products that patients tried requesting coupons/discount codes to share with patients.

The clinic social worker and dietitian integrated all activities into regular PD appointments.

2. Outcomes Measured:

1. protein knowledge (patients are able to name a way to increase protein intake)
2. albumin levels (compared from March to May)
3. protein intake (number of patients who report increased protein intake)

3. Summary of Outcomes/Results:

1. All 16 patients were able to name one or more ways to increase protein intake.
2. Of the 16 patients who participated, 4 had improved albumin, 5 had a decrease in albumin level, 6 met goal before and after the program, and one had no change. Some patients had albumin levels decrease due to health conditions not related to protein intake.
3. Of the 16 patients, 13 reported increased protein intake.

4. Impact on Patients:

Although albumin levels did not significantly change, patients learned ways to increase their protein intake. This is beneficial for patients' health regardless of albumin level changes. Patients also learned about new ways to increase protein and tried new items that may help meet daily protein needs. Patients now have coupons/discount codes available for some of the products, making them more accessible.

5. Lessons Learned:

This project highlighted the importance of hands-on education and practical support in encouraging dietary changes among peritoneal dialysis (PD) patients. We found that providing patients with protein-rich foods and supplements to try at home combined with simple, clear educational materials-helped increase their awareness and motivation to improve their protein intake. Many patients were more open to adding high-protein options to their routine after tasting them and understanding how they fit into their daily needs.

While albumin levels did not show significant changes during the project period, we recognize that albumin is influenced by many factors beyond just protein intake, such as inflammation, infection, and overall health status. Additionally, albumin improvements often take several months to appear, and may not be fully captured in a short-term intervention.

Despite this, the project successfully encouraged patients to take meaningful steps toward better nutrition. Improved protein intake supports immune function, muscle maintenance, and healing-even if albumin levels remain stable in the short term. This experience reinforced the value of personalized sampling and practical education, which we plan to continue as part of our ongoing nutrition support.

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